



Off the Sounding Board

By Sheila Miller, Editor

An unforgettable Farm Show

It's been quite a week. Farm Show crowds, commotion and competition — enough to last until next year this time. And it will probably take most of us that long to recover from the 67th Pennsylvania Farm Show and regenerate the stamina needed for the next one.

But none of us can complain about the proverbial Farm Show weather which failed to blanket our southeastern Pennsylvania under at least six inches of snow. Maybe the Farm Show weatherman failed to "see his shadow" on Saturday and, like the Punxsutawney groundhog, stayed out to enjoy the mild weather that made Farm Show week a pleasure for anyone driving to Harrisburg.

While the weather may have been a blessing, it also caused record crowds to flock to the largest indoor agricultural event on the East Coast. Negotiating at a snail's pace on the roads leading to Farm Show was a trial of patience and perseverance for many Pennsylvanians. At one point, traffic was backed up, bumper to bumper, a distance of roughly four miles as people waited in line to visit the sights and smells of Farm Show.

Once inside the concrete complex, the traffic situation wasn't much better. Shoulder to shoulder masses of people inched their way past exits and entrances through the maze of buildings that make Farm Show a nightmare for folks unfamiliar with its layout. Strollers with slumbering children and heavyweight steers and bulls were about the only things that could make the wall-to-wall crowds part like the Red Sea and allow passage.

With all the people "reaching out to touch" the miraculously well-behaved livestock (that back home on the farm let feet fly at the slightest poke), it's amazing that few mishaps occur at Farm Show. Although one older man did suffer a broken leg at this year's show after stumbling through a congested area in the dairy barn, the number of accidents compared to the staggering possibilities are gratefully few.

For those of us who enjoy or endure the Farm Show experience, there's no doubt about the fact that it is a farm-city family reunion. People who have never seen farm animals before cheer just as loudly as family and friends when junior beef, sheep, and market hog showmen receive the judges' nods. There's a pride in these successful, hardworking young people that is contagious, and strangers also can enjoy watching these youths floating on "cloud nine" and realize they are watching a small bit of Pennsylvania's history being written in the annals of Farm Show champions.

The interest and enthusiasm which most Farm Show visitors express as they stroll through the barns is felt and overheard by the hundreds of exhibitors who spend all week talking about and explaining agriculture to the crowds. Curiosity attributed to cats could have been easily transferred to Farm Show visitors, young and old, who stared wide-eyed at mammoth machinery, danced and conversed with a robot, and stuffed mouth-watering,

diet-destroying food into eager mouths hungry for deep-fried mushrooms, foamy milkshakes, and piping hot potatoes dripping with butter.

The milking parlor was another focal-point of fascination for Farm Show visitors beginning at about four o'clock each afternoon — that's when some people learned for the first time that brown cows don't produce chocolate milk, and that milk isn't pumped out of a cow by cranking her tail up and down.

All this interest in agriculture is a mixed blessing, however, for some Farm Show exhibitors who devote a week's worth of washing and grooming livestock, and consequently make their animals "too adorable and tempting to touch." Since all their scrubbing, clipping and combing is supposed to be appreciated primarily by the show judge, the coiffures created by people patting and petting meticulously groomed livestock with hands that still harbor evidence of leaking ice cream cones and cotton candy are tolerated with grimaces and strained good will.

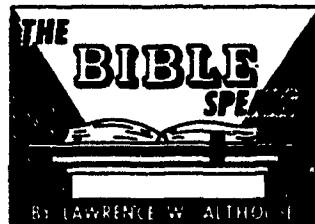
Each Farm Show brings its own special memories, like champion ribbons and warm, happy feelings. Or a taste of tanbark and embarrassment after a show animal tumbles its exhibitor in a brief escape attempt.

One Farm Show exhibitor probably will remember, for years to come, the stowaway farm cat who hitched a ride in the cattle trailer, but then decided to hightail it back home after getting a taste of trampling hooves. As the trailer came to a stop at the first traffic light, the farmer heard a call come over his CB radio from his wife who was following the load of show cattle. Amidst static and crackling, he heard his wife say something came out the back of the trailer.

The cat, called Precious, owes one of its nine lives to the fact that one of the cow's name was Princess. Thinking that one of his bovines was busting out the backdoor, the farmer kept the truck in park — lucky thing for Precious who had darted out of the trailer and sought refuge on top of the pickup's back wheel. In a matter of minutes the cat was whisked safely into the wife's pickup and back to the farm.

For me, this year's Farm Show was a continuation of my post-classroom education. But I contend that learning the latest tricks of the cattle showing trade is almost as difficult as trying to teach an 80-year-old farmer to ski. It's hard to teach an "old cattle fitter new tricks" but with the willpower in these "old bones" and the volumes of help and advice that were shared by other exhibitors, the show road rudiments will be all downhill from here — at least until I meet up with another obstacle and challenge.

Pennsylvania's Department of Agriculture has a challenge, too — how to make the 68th Farm Show even better. Many of last year's problems were overcome thanks to constructive criticisms and action by people who care about Farm Show and want to see the perennial, crowd-pleasing agstravaganza go on and on.



DEADLINE: TONIGHT!
January 16, 1983

Background Scripture:
Luke 12:13-40
Devotional Reading:
Luke 6:46-49

The deadline is not in question: tonight before a new day begins some of us will no longer be numbered among the living. I have no idea how many people will die this evening, but the statistic, I'm sure, will be staggering. The only thing we do not know is which of us will be numbered among that statistic. As we awoke this morning probably none of us entertained the thought that today might be our very last, although that is certainly not a remote possibility. All of us arose and have progressed through this day as if we had a considerable amount of time left in our lives.

DIVIDING THE INHERITANCE

Consequently, the things that have likely occupied our minds this day have not been questions of death, life eternal heaven, eternity, the Judgement of God, etc. Much more likely we have been preoccupied with more pressing matters. Like the one, for example, that was brought before Jesus one day: "Teacher, bid my brother divide the inheritance with me."

It was a reasonable request, was it not? Isn't that the way most us

have to spend our days, dividing, acquiring and keeping the things of this world that are necessary to sustain daily life? Now that interest rates are lower again, where shall I put my savings? Shall I invest part of my salary in a tax-shelter? Is this the time for me to buy a new car? Why should I accept a cutback in salary when other people are living off the fat of the land?

Jesus' reply is no less revolutionary now than it was then: "Take heed, and beware of all covetousness; for a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions." We've repeated these words so often that perhaps there abrasiveness no longer strikes us. But that they are quite contrary to the principles by which many of us live must be quite evident if we think about them. Our society — yes, even many of our churches — is founded on an abundance of possessions. Almost every judgment we make, almost every value we express is based upon material possessions. "FOOL!"

So once again Jesus told a parable. The rich man in the story is suddenly comforted with the warning that "this night" — not some distant day in the future — "your soul is required of you; and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?"

Many of those who listened to Jesus must have identified with the "rich man" in the story. If their soul's deadline were to be "tonight," obviously they would see life and their possessions in a different light: it is being "rich toward God" and not laying up "treasure," that is imperative when we face that final deadline.

If you were to know that tonight were your "deadline," what would it do to your priorities this day?

NOW IS THE TIME

By Jay Irwin

Lancaster County Agriculture Agent
Phone 717-394-6851



To Separate Farm Show Animals

The Pennsylvania Farm Show is a big event in our state this week. And, in spite of the winter month, the show attracts a large number of animals. Show regulations do a pretty good job of protecting these show animals and in building up resistance to a number of infections. However, the animals in the home herd or flock may not have the same treatment and resistance.

Therefore, it is very important to keep these two groups of animals separate for at least 30 days after the show. Segregation and sanitation are still very important practices in the livestock world. We have known of Farm Show animals that were returned to the farm and remained in good health; however, the rest of the animals in the barn came down with shipping fever or some other infection. Don't take chances by mixing the home animals with Farm Show animals, or with newly-purchased animals. Give them a 30-day period without this dangerous exposure.

To Transfer Silage

Livestock and dairy producers who have had silage stored in temporary structures might be planning to move this feed into upright silos in the next month or so. Many producers use the temporary storage until some of the material is fed out of the upright silo. By transferring into the upright silo, mechanical feeders can be used. The objective is to move the silage during cold weather. The months of January

and February normally provide this condition. When transferring during warm weather (above 50 degree F) there is danger of more heating of the silage. No preservative should be needed. The faster the material can be moved into the upright silo, the better it will settle and remove the air.

To Move Equipment Safely

Farm equipment is getting bigger and taller, as seen at the Farm Show. This creates a new hazard. Cabs on larger tractors or combines may approach heights equal to ground clearance of high voltage electrical lines. Accidental contact between equipment and the electrical line can be fatal for the operator. This is especially hazardous where long spans cross fields creating considerable sag at mid-span. CB antennas or other additions to large equipment are almost certain to create a potential hazard if they come in contact with electrical lines.

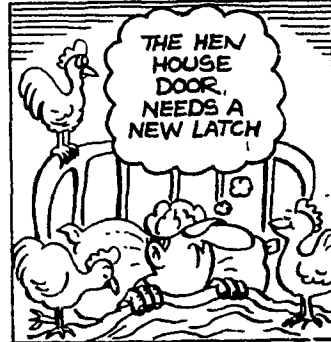
Wide equipment, such as planters and tillage equipment, folded up for transport can also reach heights that are dangerous. Also be careful when moving portable elevators. Instruct all operators and other workers about this hazard and how to avoid danger.

To Use Sawdust on Icy Walks

Freezing rain, sleet and hard packed snow on walkways and driveways is quite slippery and dangerous. The next time you have this condition, try using coarse sawdust to reduce the hazard.

(Turn to Page A12)

OTIS



DAVE CARPENTER